

## **AMHERST COUNTY SERVICE AUTHORITY**

**P. O. BOX 100  
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November 4, 2004

### **Nomination Of Cove Creek, Little Cove Creek And Its Tributaries, Rocky Branch, North Fork Of The Buffalo River From Its Confluence With Rocky Branch Downstream To The National Forest Boundary, Roberts Creek And Shady Mountain Creek As Exceptional State Waters**

The afore listed Amherst County streams are tributaries of the North Fork of the Buffalo River and Pedlar River, portions of which are currently under consideration for Exceptional State Waters (ESW) status. Each is surrounded by the George Washington National Forest, and are part of public drinking water sources for Amherst (Buffalo River) and City of Lynchburg (Pedlar River). As such the Amherst County Service Authority and the Amherst County Board of Supervisors wish to nominate them for ESW status.

Section 9 VAC 25-260-30A.3 of the antidegradation policy establishes the criteria for candidates to be designated as exceptional surface waters. All of the above named streams have exceptional recreational and environmental settings. Additionally, the North Fork of the Buffalo River and its tributaries are classified as wild natural trout streams. Therefore, each of these streams meet the ESW classification criteria.

#### **Exceptional Environmental Settings:**

The George Washington National Forest is part of the Appalachian Hardwood Forest, which is located in the Eastern Deciduous Forest Province. Over 40 species of trees are represented in this National Forest, along with over 2,000 species of shrubs and herbaceous plants. Hardwoods dominate the forest, comprising approximately 80 percent of the acreage, with conifers making up the remaining 20%. There is significant variation in the vegetation and many natural changes occur through natural forest succession. Many types of wildlife are present, including over 50 species of mammals, 200 species of birds, and numerous types of reptiles, and amphibians.

These streams are located in the eastern slopes of the Blue Ridge Mountains with stream elevations varying from 1,200 to 3,320 ft. Surrounded by majestic mountains and narrow forested ridges they occupy unique "mountain cove" environs, and provide high quality source waters for the surrounding communities.



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**Exceptional Aquatic Communities:**

In the case of the North Fork of the Buffalo River, and its tributaries, they are designated by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries as Special Regulation Wild Trout Streams. Wild trout are considered indicators of positive environmental quality due to their extreme sensitivity to changes in water quality and /or habitat. A population of reproducing native trout is indicative of near pristine conditions.

**Exceptional Recreational Opportunities:**

**North Fork of the Buffalo River, And Its Tributaries:**

These streams are all contained within the 7,695-acre Mount Pleasant National Scenic Area. The Scenic Area is traversed by the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, two "blue blaze" loop trails accessing the highest mountains in Amherst County, and numerous unmaintained hiking trails. The majority of the decades old logging roads (50 to 85 yrs), and narrow gage railway beds, within the interior of the Scenic Area are limited to non-motorized traffic. As they have returned to nature they have acted as the backbone of many of the unmaintained, hiking trails, and provide access to the nominated streams. This area and its streams provide outstanding backpacking, fishing, nature study, primitive camping opportunities and additional opportunities for solitude and serenity in an aesthetically pleasing environment.

Under the terms of the National Scenic Area legislation, all mining is prohibited and timber extraction is highly limited. The intent of the legislation was to preserve the land in a natural state in perpetuity, and provide the citizenry with an old-growth mountain forest experience, while protecting water quality.

**Roberts Creek and Shady Mountain Creek:**

Roberts Creek, from the National Forest boundary downstream to the Pedlar River, and Shady Mountain Creek, from its headwaters downstream to the Pedlar River occupy narrow "mountain cove" environs. Limited access is provided by area Forest Service roads and old logging roads. Access to the majority of the streams and the adjacent ridge lines is via unmaintained hiking trails and cross-country "bush whacking". The streams are within a mile of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail and ½ mile from the Blue Ridge Parkway. The undeveloping areas surrounding the streams offer exceptional opportunities for remote area hiking, backpacking, nature study and primitive camping. They would complement the adjacent portions of the Pedlar River currently proposed for ESW status.

**Statement Of Potential Impacts:**

The area surrounding the nominated streams is part of the George Washington National Forest. ESW status will result in no impact.

**Conclusion:**

Based on the submitted information, the nominated streams are outstanding natural resources, deserving of special protection. They meet the Exceptional State Waters criteria specific by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality. Providing ESW status to these streams will complement our community's watershed protection efforts (which have twice won national recognition from Region III of the USEPA). On behalf of the Amherst County Service Authority and the Amherst County Board of Supervisors we formally nominate these streams for Exceptional State Waters status.

Sincerely,



Dan E. French  
Director of Public Utilities

11/4/04  
Date

**Attachments:**

1. USGS topo maps
2. 8/3/04 e-mail from Grant Massie, Amherst County Director of Planning, to Jean W. Gregory.



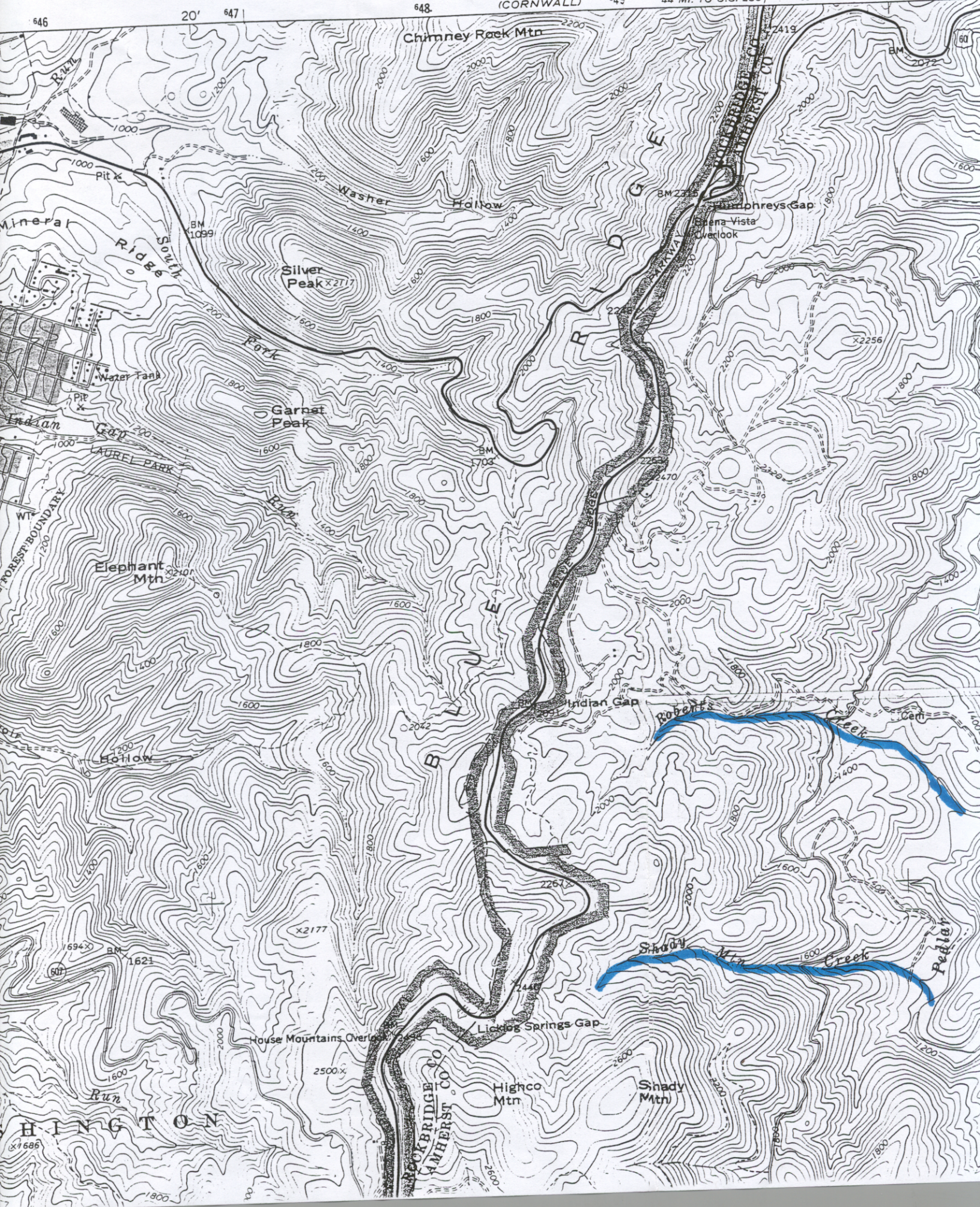


Buena Vista, VA

5159 IV SE  
(CORNWALL)

44 MI. TO U.S. 250

17°30"





"Forks Of Buffalo"

DIVISION OF MINERAL RESOURCES  
JAMES L. CALVER, STATE GEOLOGIST  
5159 I SW  
(MONTEBELLO)

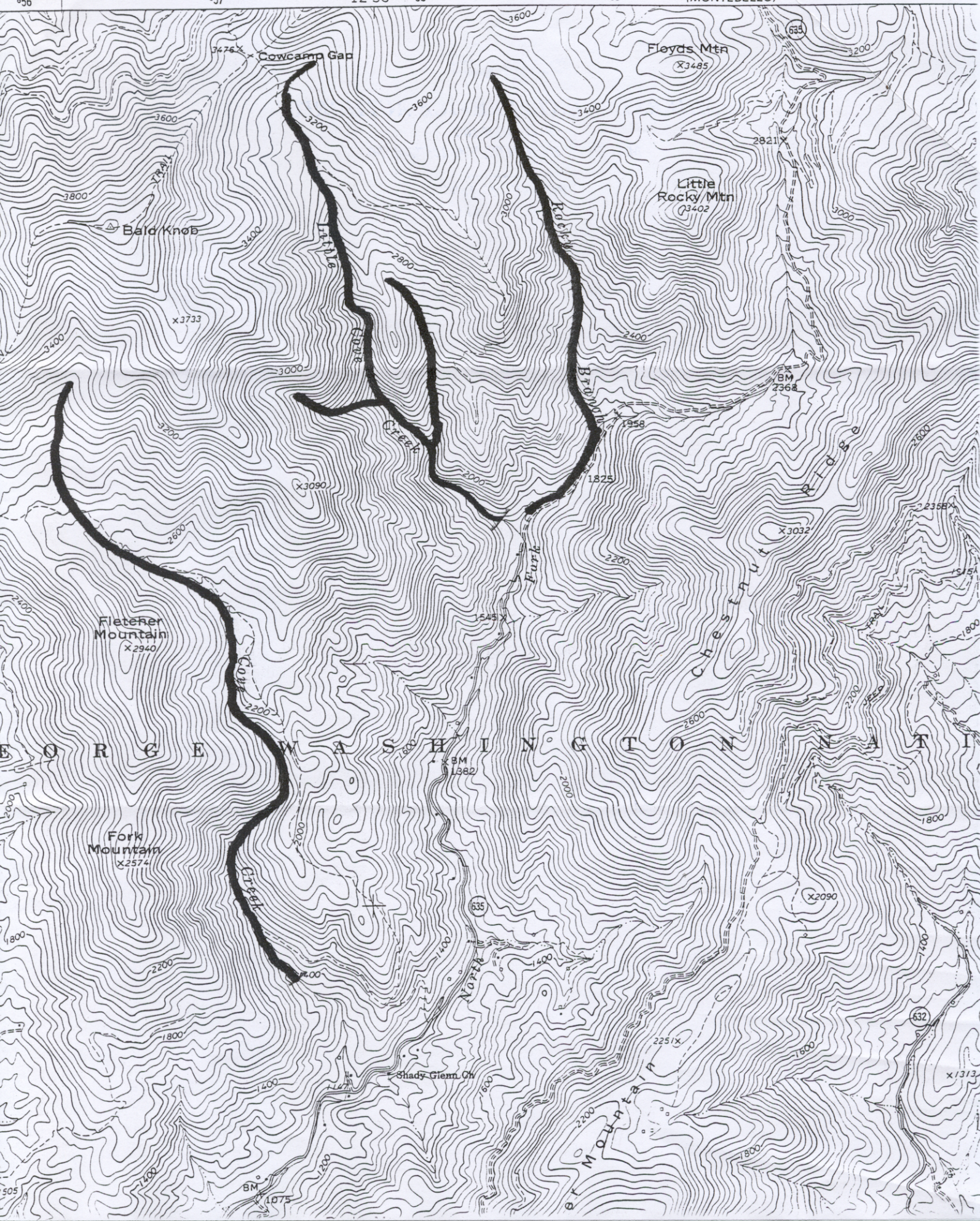
656

657

12'30" 658

659

(MONTEBELLO)





Grant Massie/Amherst  
08/03/2004 03:41 PM

To jwgregory@deq.virginia.gov  
cc R. Bryan David/Amherst@Amherst  
bcc  
Subject Exceptional Waters Program

Jean W. Gregory  
Environmental Manager  
Water Quality Standards

Dear Ms. Gregory,

On behalf of the Amherst County Board of Supervisors I would like to convey their support for the Exception Waters Program as it applies to the waters within the National Forest of Amherst County and specifically to a subset of the Buffalo River, Pedlar River and Brown Mountain Creek. The goals of the program are consistent with the county comprehensive plan. The Board understands that Amherst County will assume no management or enforcement responsibilities due to this effort. Finally, the Board would support the inclusion of all tributary streams to the aforementioned streams.

Sincerely,

S. Grant Massie, Director of Planning